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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003677

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ANBAR GEO: PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS WILL GO WELL

REF: BAGHDAD 3620

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor John Fox for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Anbar Governorate Electoral Office Director (GEO) believes upcoming provincial elections will go well in Anbar. The GEO is conducting public meetings in Anbar to educate candidates in the parties and the public about the upcoming elections. The GEO Director has two main worries about the elections: election-day losers publicly condemning the results, and difficulties he has traveling and moving election materials between Baghdad and Anbar. END SUMMARY.

ELECTION DAY ISSUES

[1](#)3. (SBU) Anbar GEO Director Khalid Rajab and his staff met with the PRT and MNF-West on November 16 in Camp Ramadi to discuss the current status of preparations for provincial elections. Topics included candidate registration, election day issues, the movement of elections people and ballots into and out of Baghdad, and security challenges in the Exhibition and Challenge period. He made the following points:

-- He believes the elections will go well. He allowed for the possibility of an isolated AQI attack, but thought that in general Anbaris oppose any resurgence of AQI activity. He noted that the political entities in Anbar want to participate in the elections.

-- His greatest concern is the reaction of losing candidates. He thinks it likely that losers will publicly question and/or condemn the credibility of the election process. In a more general concern, he also noted that Anbaris lack experience voting in elections.

-- He expects to receive soon the names of the teachers who will work at polling stations on election day (REF). According to Irene Dultz (Iraq representative for International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)), the Iraqi Ministry of Education must provide the names and genders of teachers assigned to work in polling centers on election day to facilitate training and planning.

-- The GEO has conducted a series of meetings to educate the parties and the public about the upcoming elections. Primary themes at the meetings include: 1) Respecting others' views; 2) Avoiding violence; 3) Equality of all political entities; and 4) Letting the ballot box be the judge. They have held meetings in Fallujah (October), Saqlawiyah (on November 14), and will hold another meeting on November 21 in Ameriyah. Rajab vows to continue to hold meetings until he has visited every city in western Anbar.

SECURITY ISSUES

¶4. (C) Rajab confirmed he is coordinating his activities with the Governor, the Provincial Joint Coordination Center (PJCC), the Iraqi Police (IP) and the Iraqi Army (IA). He stated that while the GEO wants Coalition Forces (CF) involved in security planning for elections, it does not want CF intervention/interference (perceived or real) in the elections themselves. The GEO recognized that the Joint Security Plan for provincial elections would encompass both the IP and the IA with CF support behind the scenes.

¶5. (C) He claimed that the public perceives the IP as highly partisan and biased toward the Muatammar Sahwa Al Iraq (MSI) party*the political party developed from the Sahwa/SOI movement. He indicated that this negative perception will detract from Election Day security.

IRAQI POLICE ISSUES

¶6. (C) Rajab remarked that despite having sent a detailed plan to the police about the 28 Voter Registration Centers (VRCs) open in Anbar for the electoral Exhibition and Challenge period (November 5-12), the IP left 16 of the 28 VRCs unguarded. However, the GEO noted that there were no security problems at any of the VRCs.

MOVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

¶7. (C) Rajab commented that travel is a challenge for him,

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especially when going to Baghdad for meetings or to transport materials. He noted that the Muthanna Brigade (based in the Abu Ghurayb district between Anbar and Baghdad) has prohibited any Anbar-based Iraqi Army escorts (with whom the GEO travels) from passing checkpoint 56. NOTE: Checkpoint 56 is in the vicinity of Abu Ghurayb and had been a problem for the GEO during the voter registration period. END NOTE.

¶8. (SBU) The GEO and his staff have difficulty maintaining lines of communicating with their outlying polling centers. They note that landlines are often cut and considered very unreliable; mobile phone service is spotty and intermittent; and Thuraya phones have dead spots and do not work well inside buildings.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) The Anbar public's lack of voting experience, coupled with a very complicated ballot, are significant challenges to the process. The GEO is attempting to mitigate these problems with party and voter outreach. Khalid Rajab continues to impress both the PRT and MNF-W with his knowledge, level of preparation, and thoroughness. So far, he has been ahead of the curve. We will continue to stay in touch with the Anbar GEO. END COMMENT.
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